

# Obama Says What He Leaves Behind is Better than What He Inherited

WASHINGTON - In a letter to the American people, US President Barack Obama said on Thursday that at the end of his two four-year terms, he was confident what he was leaving behind was better than what he inherited.

"This is where America stands after eight years of progress. By so many measures, our country is stronger and more prosperous than it was when we started - a situation I'm proud to leave for my successor," he said.

In the letter, Mr Obama highlighted the 2011



commando raid in Abbottabad that killed Osama bin Laden as one of the major achievements of his eight-year rule.

The outgoing US president will hand over power to president-elect Donald Trump at the swearing-in ceremony in Washington on Jan 20.

Mr Obama recalled that when he took over on Jan 20, 2009, nearly 180,000 American troops were serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and "the mastermind of the worst terror attack on American soil remained at large." (AP)

## Nieghbor News

### Imran Advises Qatari Prince Not to Appear in SC

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan said on Thursday that Qatar's former prime minister Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jaber Al Thani would be jailed if he appeared before the Supreme Court (SC) to authenticate the letter he had sent to rescue Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the Panamagate.

Mr Khan asked Prime

Minister Nawaz Sharif to submit evidence if he was not involved in money laundering and had sent money abroad through legal channels to purchase properties in London.

He said that the letter of the Qatari prince had proved to be false as the prime minister's daughter Maryam Nawaz was the owner of the London property. "The Qatari Prince's letter is false, I don't know which prince will come to their defence next," the PTI chief said. (Monitoring Desk)

### Tajikistan US Discuss Security Cooperation

DUSHANBEH - Foreign Minister of Tajikistan and the U.S. Ambassador Elizabeth Millard raised security issues in the country, report local media.

During the talks, the two stressed the importance of continuation of the development of security cooperation.

The U.S. government has been supporting Tajikistan in the sphere

of defense and national security since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The U.S. government has allocated more than \$262 million to Tajikistan for defense.

The meeting of the Foreign Minister with the U.S. Ambassador addressed also economic and trade cooperation. (AKI Press)

### Iran's Military Advisory Presence in Syria no Violation of Sovereignty: Senior MP

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian lawmaker says Iran's military advisory presence in Syria is no violation of the Arab country's sovereignty as it is at the request of the Damascus government.

"If we are present in Syria at an advisory level, it is at the request of and in coordination with the Damascus government, and such a measure is no interference in the domestic affairs of coun-

tries," Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the chairman of the Iranian Parliament's Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy, told reporters in Damascus.

Boroujerdi, who is visiting Syria at the head of a parliamentary delegation, said it was well known that under international law establishing presence in a country without having obtained ... (More on P4)...(33)

### Heads of Uzbekistan, South Korea Hold Telephone Conversation

TASHKENT - President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Acting President of South Korea Hwang Kyo-ahn held a telephone conversation on Thursday on the initiative of the Korean side, press service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan said.

Hwang Kyo-ahn congratulated Shavkat Mirziyoyev with convincing victory in the elections for the post of the President. The parties exchanged congratula-

tions on the remarkable date in the history of bilateral cooperation - the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Korea. "Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Hwang Kyo-ahn noted with great satisfaction the high level of mutual trust, openness and mutual understanding between the two countries, and provides ... (More on P4)...(34)

### Iran Oil Ministry Rules out Meddling in Turkmenistan Gas Dispute

TEHRAN - Iranian Oil Ministry will not intervene in the country's recent gas dispute with Turkmenistan over the outstanding debts for previous natural gas sales, oil minister said.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh has said that the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) and Turkmen state company Turkmen gas should resolve the "commercial dispute" themselves, Mizan news agency reported. He further expressed considerable reluctance to link the gas dispute between Iran and Turkmenistan to diplomatic ... (More on P4)...(35)

### Trump Aims to Destroy IS: Expert

WASHINGTON - While U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to get rid of the Islamic State (IS) once and for all, the radical group is already on the run due to increased pressure over the past year, an expert said in an interview with Xinhua.

Trump reiterated promises to defeat the group after the recent deadly attack on a Christmas market in Berlin, which killed 12 and injured dozens more inno-

cent people. The billionaire president-elect has blasted outgoing President Barack Obama for still not having defeated IS in the radicals' Middle East stronghold. But Wayne White, former deputy director of the State Department's Middle East Intelligence Office, said actually most of the heavy lifting has already been done, and IS appears to be on its way out.

Ongoing U.S. and coalition ... (More on P4)...(25)

### UN to Attend, Contribute to Syria Talks in Kazakhstan: UN Official

GENEVA - The UN Special Envoy for Syria said Thursday that preparations were being made to attend Russian and Turkish-backed peace talks scheduled to take place in the Kazakh capital of Astana later this month.

Staffan de Mistura added he hoped the initiative would pave the way for successful UN-mediated Syrian negotiations next month.

"We, the UN, believe that any effort that consolidates the cessation of hostilities and helps in preparing for a discussion that will take place here in Geneva in February is certainly welcomed," de Mistura told reporters following a humanitarian task force meeting.

"We plan to attend and we will contribute to it to hopefully make it a success and produce deliv-



ables that we can then use at the Geneva talks," he added.

The UN official said last

month that he planned to resume Syrian negotiations on Feb. 8 to try and ... (More on P4)...(26)

### Belgium Grants over 15,000 Asylum Seekers Protection Status in 2016

BRUSSELS - Altogether 15,478 asylum seekers were granted a protection status in Belgium in 2016, registering the highest record, the country's Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS)'s annual report said on Friday.

Among them, 12,197, or 45.8 percent of the total applicants, were granted a refugee status, while 3,281, representing 11.9 percent,

were given a subsidiary protection status, according to CGRS spokesman Damien Dermaux.

Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq ranked the first three countries of origin of the refugees.

Moreover, the CGRS made over 22,000 decisions on the refugee application cases in 2016, a 30 percent rise compared with the figure in 2015.

The ... (More on P4)...(27)

### US-Russia Ties Hardly to Break Spell of Bell-Shaped Development

BEIJING - Great uncertainties remain on whether the U.S.-Russia ties can sustain long-term stable development, even after Russia-friendly U.S. President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

Analysts say it is possible the U.S.-Russia relationship will fall again under the spell of bell-shaped development since the end of the Cold War, as structural contradictions exist

between the two countries due to total difference in their global strategies, national security and geopolitical interests.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States, with a strategy of contacting while containing Russia, has not fundamentally changed its policies of weakening and suppressing Russia.

In international affairs, Washington usually ne-



glects Moscow's interests on issues concerning Russia's security and strategic interests; while Moscow

opposes U.S. hegemonism and unilateralism, and hopes to set up a new ... (More on P4)...(28)

### Russian Aircraft Carrier Ends Mission in Syria and Set to Leave

DAMASCUS - Syria's Chief of Staff Abdullah Ayoub visited the Russian aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov on Friday, state news agency SANA reported.

The visit was ordered by President Bashar al-Assad as the Russian carrier as part of a new Russian decision to scale down military presence in the country.

"The relations tying the Russian and Syrian armies are robust and based on friendship, cooperation, and the defense of human-



itarian and ethical values," SANA quoted Ayoub as saying during his visit. He also highlighted the support the Russian air force has rendered to the Syrian army in the war

on terror, and stressed the need to continue military cooperation, even after "the victory on terrorism." For his part, Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the Russian ... (More on P4)...(29)

### US Blacklists Osama Bin Laden's Son as Terrorist

WASHINGTON - The United States on Thursday designated Hamza bin Laden, son of late al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, as terrorist, the State Department said in a statement.

As a result of the designation, all property subject to U.S. jurisdiction in which Hamza bin Laden has any interest is blocked and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with him.

On August 14, 2015, Hamza bin Laden was officially announced by al-Qaeda senior leader Ayman al-Zawahiri as an official member of the group.

Hamza bin Laden has called for acts of terrorism in Western capitals and threatened revenge against ... (More on P4)...(30)

### Senior US Senator Pledges Action Against Alleged Russia Hacking

WASHINGTON - John McCain, chairman of U.S. Senate's Armed Services Committee, on Thursday vowed to take actions in response to Russia's alleged cyber attacks during last year's presidential election. "Every American should be alarmed by Russia's attacks on our nation," McCain said in a Senate hearing on cyber threats to the U.S., calling Moscow's action "unprecedented attack on our democracy".

U.S. intelligence had concluded that the hack and release of the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton staff emails was ordered by the Kremlin and was designed to put Donald Trump in the Oval Office. Moscow also denied the accusations. "There is no national security interest more vital to the United States of America than the ability to hold free and fair elections without foreign interference," McCain said. The senior senator called on Congress to set partisan-ship aside and work together to "deter, defend against and when necessary, respond to foreign cyber attacks".

The hearing on Thursday brought together top U.S. intelligence officials, including Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence Marcel Lettre and NSA and U.S. Cyber Command chief Mike Rogers. (Xinhua)

### US Tanks Roll Into Germany to Bolster NATO Deterrent

BERLIN - Ships began unloading U.S. tanks, self-propelled howitzers and hundreds of other fighting vehicles Friday in the northern German port of Bremerhaven, to be moved into Eastern Europe to bolster NATO's deterrence against possible Russian aggression.

Some 3,500 troops from the 4th Infantry Division in Fort Carson, Col-

orado, will join up with the equipment, which includes 87 tanks and 144 Bradley fighting vehicles, over the next two weeks.

The deployment marks the start of a new phase of Operation Atlantic Resolve, which foresees the continuous presence of an American armored brigade combat team in Europe on a ... (More on P4)...(31)

### UK Brexit-Backer Nigel Farage to Attend Trump Inauguration

LONDON - British anti-European Union politician Nigel Farage says he will attend Donald Trump's inauguration as U.S. president.

Farage, one of Trump's strongest U.K. supporters, told Sky News that he had been invited by Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant. He called the Jan. 20 ceremony in Washington "a great, historic event" and Trump's election "a political revolution."

Farage led the anti-EU U.K. Independence Party until November, and was a key ... (More on P4)...(32)